United Nations A/AC.109/2007/9

General Assembly

Distr.: General
22 March 2007

Original: English

Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

New Caledonia

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

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07-27889 (E) 110407

I. General

1. New Caledonia,[1] a Non-Self-Governing Territory administered by France, is located in the Pacific Ocean, about 1,500 kilometres east of Australia and 1,700 kilometres north of New Zealand. It comprises one large island, known as Grande Terre, and smaller islands known as the Loyalty Islands (Ouvéa, Maré, Lifou and Tiga), the Bélap Archipelago, the Isle of Pines and Huon Islands. There are also several uninhabited islands to the north of the Loyalty Islands. The area of Grande Terre is 16,750 square kilometres, and that of the Territory is 19,103 square kilometres. Nouméa, the capital, is located in the south of Grande Terre. The Territory is divided into three provinces, South and North (on Grande Terre) and the Loyalty Islands.

2. In August 2004, a census completed by the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies placed the population of New Caledonia at 230,789, an increase of 33,953, or 14.7 per cent since the last census in 1996.[2] The 2004 census, which focused on regional groupings of the population, as opposed to ethnic groupings, provoked controversy and incited a boycott by the indigenous movement, dissatisfied with the omission of questions regarding ethnicity. The questions had been removed following an intervention by the President of France, who had labelled them scandalous and unlawful.

3. As a result, the only information on ethnicity currently available dates from 1996. According to the 1996 census, the population comprised indigenous Melanesians, known as Kanaks (42.5 per cent); persons of European origin, mainly French (37.1 per cent); Wallisians (8.4 per cent); Polynesians (3.8 per cent); and others, mainly Indonesians and Vietnamese (8.2 per cent). Almost half the population was reported to be under 25 years of age.

4. Although there was a measurable increase in the population between 1996 and 2004, as mentioned above, the demographics remained unaltered, with the majority of the population (68 per cent) living in the South Province, mainly around the greater Nouméa area, while 21 per cent lived in the North Province, and only 10.6 per cent in the Loyalty Islands. In 1996, the native Kanak population made up almost 78 per cent of the population of the North Province and 97 per cent of the population of the Islands, but only 25.5 per cent of the population of the South Province. With respect to the Territory's second largest population group, persons of European origin, 89 per cent lived in the South Province. The official language is French and about 28 Melanesian-Polynesian dialects are spoken.

5. The political and administrative structures of New Caledonia were fundamentally altered by the Nouméa Accord (A/AC.109/2114, annex), signed in May 1998 between the Government of France, the pro-independence Front de libération national kanak socialiste (FLNKS) and the integrationist Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République (RPCR). Under the terms of the Accord, the New Caledonian parties opted for a negotiated solution and progressive autonomy from France rather than an immediate referendum on political status. The transfer of powers from France began in 2000 and is to end with a referendum between 2013

[1] The information contained in the present paper has been derived from published sources, including those of the territorial Government, and from information transmitted to the Secretary-General by the administering Power under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations.

[2] Institut de la statistique et des études économiques 2004 — Nouvelle Calédonie.

and 2018, when the Territory will opt for either full independence or a form of associated statehood. The characteristics of New Caledonia's economy and employment, as well as current efforts to implement a policy of redressing economic and social imbalances between the more prosperous South Province and the less developed North Province and Loyalty Islands, are described in section III below.

II. Constitutional, political and legal issues

A. Recent developments

6. Following the ratification of the Nouméa Accord by the people of the Territory and the codification of its provisions into French law, New Caledonia is no longer considered an Overseas Territory. Instead, the Government of France describes it as a community sui generis, which has institutions designed for it alone to which certain non-revocable powers of State will gradually be transferred. Details on the political and legislative aspects of the Nouméa process and the new institutional arrangements are contained in the 2005 report (see A/AC.109/2005/13, paras. 6-10, and 30 and 31).

7. For 25 years, the party system in New Caledonia was dominated by the anti-independence RPCR, which was founded and led until 2005 by long-time President of the South Province, Jacques Lafleur. According to the administering Power, uneasiness about one party dominating the party system grew and culminated just months prior to the Caledonian general elections in May 2004 with the emergence of a new party, l'Avenir Ensemble (AE).[3] The AE party is opposed to complete independence from France. However, the party is seen as being more oriented towards consensus with the indigenous Kanak movement, and supportive of full implementation of the Nouméa Accord. The indigenous movement is part of FLNKS, a coalition of several pro-independence groups, of which only the Union calédonienne (UC) and the Parti de libération kanak (PALIKA) are represented in the Territory's Congress.

8. FLNKS has faced problems in defining its internal organization and party strategy and has been without a leader since 2002, owing to splits within the alliance. FLNKS insists that a future vote about New Caledonia's status should be about full independence rather than an endorsement of a continuing relationship with France, as advocated by the anti-independence party RPCR and the leaders of the AE party.[4]

9. Although RPCR remains the main opposition force, the party is also facing internal division amid doubts about its survival as a major political force. Its former leader, Mr. Lafleur, established a new party, the Rassemblement pour la Calédonie (RPC), in 2005. RPC shares the anti-independence agenda of RPCR but is highly critical of its failure to defeat AE.[5]

10. The last elections for the three Provincial Assemblies, which also determine the composition of Congress, the legislative body of New Caledonia, were held on 9 May 2004, ending the 25-year domination of the Caledonian Government by

[3] Administering Power, "*L'évolution de la Nouvelle Calédonie en 2004*".
[4] Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report* (December 2005).
[5] *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, www.lnc.nc, 30 October 2006.

RPCR (see para. 9 above). In its first election, AE obtained 16 of the 54 seats in Congress, on a par with RPCR. One of the parties normally under the umbrella of FLNKS, UC, decided to run its own candidates separately in the elections. While FLNKS won nine seats, UC obtained seven. The National Front received four seats in Congress and two smaller parties obtained one seat each. The anti-independence alliance increased its representation from 31 seats to 36 seats. According to a report of the French National Assembly, that gain was due mainly to fragmentation within the independence alliance. In the South Province, where the independence movement was split into several lists, no representative received the required 5 per cent of the vote necessary for a seat.[6]

11. At the level of the provinces, AE won 19 of the 40 seats in the South Province, while the North Province remained in the hands of FLNKS and UC, with the parties holding 11 and 9 seats respectively from a total of 22. The independence alliance was the strongest performer in the Loyalty Islands, where it held 6 of 14 seats. In each province, a member of the leading party was elected President of the Provincial Assembly, who also acts as the chief executive of the province. RPCR also lost the presidency in the South Province, which has been considered its stronghold for the past 25 years when RPCR President Jacques Lafleur served in that post. In January 2005, Mr. Lafleur resigned from his post as President of RPCR and was replaced by Pierre Frogier.[7] In view of the results, a report of the French National Assembly spoke of growing political division between a pro-independence North and an anti-independence South.[6] The next elections for Congress and the Provincial Assemblies are scheduled for 2009. Further details on the structure of the Government are contained in the 2005 report (see A/AC.109/2005/13, paras. 11-16, 25 and 26).

12. In July 2006, the leader of AE, Harold Martin, was re-elected as President of the Congress.[8] As head of AE, Mr. Martin has held talks with RPCR President Frogier to discuss a possible rapprochement between the parties before the 2007 presidential election in France. Both parties claim allegiance to the French ruling party, Union pour un mouvement populaire (UMP). UMP President Nicolas Sarkozy has encouraged AE and RPCR to unify in support of his presidential candidacy, though Mr. Martin clarified that the parties are simply seeking improved relations, not a merger.[9]

13. Political stability in New Caledonia can be undermined by the existence of the "collegiality clause" of the Nouméa Accord, which states that if a member of the 11-member Government Cabinet resigns and there is no replacement from his or her party, the whole Government will have to be re-elected by a vote in Congress. As has happened on previous occasions, there is a risk that disgruntled parties might resort to the clause again in order to force a new election.[10]

14. Marie-Noëlle Thémereau of AE was elected territorial President in June 2004, following a political impasse caused by a disagreement between AE and RPCR. Déwé Gorodey, a Kanak writer and FLNKS member, was elected Vice-President, marking the first time that the territorial Government has been led by two women.[11]

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[6] Assemblée nationale, report No. 1868 (13 October 2004).

[7] *Pacific Islands Report*, 23 June 2004.

[8] *Pacific Magazine*, www. pacificmagazine.net/news, 2 October 2006.

[9] Ibid., 28 July 2006.

[10] Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report* (December 2003).

[11] *Pacific Islands Report*, 13 July 2004.

AE and RPCR each have four executive seats in the Government, FLNKS holding the balance of power with three seats.[12]

15. Regarding French State institutions, in the French Senate elections held in September 2001, incumbent Simon Loueckhote of RPCR was elected New Caledonia's Senator for an additional nine years. In the June 2002 elections for the French National Assembly, New Caledonian voters returned two members of the pro-integrationist RPCR to their seats, namely, Mr. Lafleur, who has held the seat in Paris since 1978, and Mr. Frogier.[13] As mentioned earlier, Mr. Lafleur has since resigned from both RPCR and UMP. The first round of the next French presidential election will take place in April 2007, followed by a possible second round in May and legislative elections in June 2007.

16. The French State is represented in the Territory by High Commissioner Michel Mathieu, who was appointed to the post in September 2005.

17. As envisaged in the Nouméa Accord, in 1999 the new institutions began to enact country laws (*lois du pays*), which have the full force of law and can be contested only before the Constitutional Council. Since 1999, 39 such laws have been adopted. The most recent information provided by the administering Power notes that five of these laws were adopted in 2005, relating to social, finance and customs issues and various tax laws.[14]

18. In the past, in spite of the considerable institutional and administrative advances described above, progress was often hindered by friction between RPCR and FLNKS, owing to their differing interpretations of collegiality in Government matters. They held opposing views on issues such as voter eligibility, mining initiatives and, especially, implementation of the Nouméa Accord. President Thémereau and her party have promised to resume implementation of the commitments outlined in the Nouméa Accord, especially those related to social reform, in collaboration with indigenous Kanak leaders. In this regard the Government has raised the minimum wage and has begun to tackle a chronic shortage of low-cost housing. It also gained congressional approval in January 2007 to establish the first Kanak languages academy, which aims to preserve up to 40 indigenous languages and dialects.[15] The Government, however, remains opposed to full independence for the Territory from France, while Kanak leaders mostly favour full independence and are becoming increasingly impatient with the slow implementation of the Nouméa Accord.[4]

19. In January 2006, the Secretary-General of the United Nations received a letter from the National Council for Indigenous Peoples' Rights of New Caledonia (Conseil National pour les Droits du Peuple Autochtone en Kanaky Nouvelle Calédonie (CNDPA)), stating its dissatisfaction with the implementation of the Nouméa Accord. According to CNDPA, the indigenous Kanak people have been systematically excluded from the process of power transfer mandated by the Accord and chronically underrepresented in New Caledonia's governmental and social structures.

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[12] Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Profile 2006*.

[13] *Oceania Flash*, 17 June 2002.

[14] *Rapport annuel de la France aux Nations Unies: la nouvelle Calédonie* (December 2005).

[15] *Pacific Magazine*, www.pacificmagazine.net, 18 January 2007.

20. In 2004, the French Government expressed its intention to be an impartial and engaged judge during the Nouméa process, and President Chirac stressed the role of the French Government as a partner in the transfer of further jurisdictions to New Caledonia. He pledged that the Nouméa Accord would be fully implemented and respected by the State and that it would help to further the development of education, environment, regional cooperation and metallurgical projects.[3]

21. As mentioned above (see para. 10), divisions within the pro-independence camp have been apparent since the resignation of FLNKS leader Roch Wamytam from the Government in October 2001 and the growing conflict between the various components of the party, including among those represented in Congress. While PALIKA represents a moderate position with regard to the implementation of the Nouméa Accord, UC has adopted a more radical approach towards independence.[16] The whole implementation process of the Nouméa Accord could be jeopardized by ongoing instability and observers have noted that the dissolution of FLNKS cannot be ruled out.[10]

22. In January 2005 the Committee of signatories of the Nouméa Accord met in Paris. Prior to the meeting, it was discussed whether AE should be allowed to participate in the follow-up process, which historically was supposed to be between France and the original signatories of the Accord. RPCR was opposed to the idea of including the new party. In the end, a compromise was reached stipulating that each delegation was allowed to include members of other parties, such as AE.[16] According to the most recent information provided by the administering Power, the following issues were discussed: the composition of the electorate for New Caledonian elections; the introduction of the euro; new development agreements for the period 2006 to 2009; and the implications of the new census regarding financial support for New Caledonia.

23. The issue of voter eligibility is central to the implementation of the Nouméa Accord. On 19 February 2007, the French Assembly passed a controversial amendment to the French Constitution, allowing New Caledonia to restrict voter eligibility in local polls to those who were on the 1998 roll when the Nouméa Accord was signed. That measure, known as the "frozen" electoral roll, will affect approximately 7,000 French citizens who arrived in New Caledonia after 1998. The issue became highly politicized in France, with the ruling UMP internally divided and the opposition Parti Socialiste and Union pour la démocratie française in support.[17] Critics of the amendment, including anti-independence parties, argued that it represented a major infringement of the constitutional principle of universal suffrage, while both French supporters and pro-independence parties defended the measure as a guarantee to the Kanak population that it will not be marginalized by a sudden influx of French voters in future elections.[18]

24. Another political issue that continues to cause tension in New Caledonia is the inter-ethnic strain between the Kanaks and the settlers from the French territory of Wallis and Futuna, and the confrontations that flared between them in 2001 and 2002 (details contained in A/AC.109/2002/13, paras. 30-32, A/AC.109/2003/7, para. 32, and A/AC.109/2005/13, paras. 37 and 38). Tensions between the two

[16] *Pacific Islands Report*, 12 January 2005.

[17] *Le Monde*, 15 January 2007.

[18] *Pacific Magazine*, www.pacificmagazine.net/news, 20 February 2007.

groups resurged in August 2006, with a number of violent confrontations and acts of arson in suburbs of Nouméa.[19]

B. External relations

25. The legal framework within which New Caledonia may establish external relations is governed by the Organic Law of 1999 (details are contained in A/AC.109/2005/13, para. 9). In that regard, the participants at the January 2002 meeting of the signatories of the Nouméa Accord agreed on the importance of developing trade and other relations with the larger actors in the Pacific region (Australia and New Zealand), as well as with other island States, and of building on existing links with regional organizations. Another concern expressed was the need to establish better links with the European Union (EU), given its political, commercial and financial importance.

26. On this multilateral front, New Caledonia has strengthened its ties with the EU, within which it has the status of associated territory. According to a 2006 Government press release, the European Development Fund is currently funding a number of projects in the Territory, including vocational training programmes, a nearly completed Nouméa aquarium and renovation of the Nouméa-La Tontouta airport.[20] New Caledonia participated in the EU Overseas Countries and Territories Forum, held in Nuuk, Greenland, from 5 to 7 September 2006. The agenda covered the environment, trade and regional integration.[21]

27. Another important issue related to the EU is the possible introduction of the euro in New Caledonia in 2007. Currently, the Territory's currency is the Comptoirs Français du Pacifique franc, which has an exchange rate fixed to the euro. According to President Thémereau, a consensus among the Territory's major political forces is a prerequisite for any decision with regard to the introduction of the euro. The European Union demands it be simultaneously introduced into all three French Pacific Territories following the formally expressed wish of their Governments.[22]

28. In October 2006, at the 37th Summit of the Pacific Islands Forum in Fiji, New Caledonia gained associate member status, giving the Territory the right to participate in Forum discussions. Previously, New Caledonia only had observer status.[23]

[19] Ibid., 29 August 2006.

[20] Ibid., 10 May 2006.

[21] See European Commission report on the Fifth OCT-EU Forum, http://ec.europa.eu, 20 September 2006.

[22] Marie-Noëlle Thémereau, "Declaration de politique générale", 17 August 2004; Conclusions of the Committee of Signatories of the Nouméa Accord, 20 January 2005.

[23] Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report* (December 2006).

III. Socio-economic conditions

A. General

29. New Caledonia, with its considerable economic assets, ranks among the more affluent Pacific nations. New Caledonians, with an average annual per capita income of $12,800, enjoy one of the highest incomes in the Pacific region.[24] The Territory, however, also suffers from long-standing structural imbalances between the economically dominant South Province and the considerably less developed North Province and the Loyalty Islands. Therefore, in the context of the Matignon Accords of 1988 (see A/AC.109/1000, paras. 9-14) and the Nouméa Accord of 1998, many of the efforts of the Government of France and New Caledonian institutions in the past decade have been aimed at *rééquilibrage*; that is, redressing the balance among the three provinces in terms of infrastructure, social services and employment opportunities. Accordingly, 70 per cent of State assistance to the Territory is earmarked for the North Province and the Loyalty Islands, with the remaining 30 per cent for the South Province. In addition, €19 million have been reserved for investment contracts between the French State and the local government communities (*communes*) in the Territory. At the end of 2003, 19 *communes* had signed contracts with the State, focused on road works, public buildings, new schools, water supplies, sanitation and waste disposal. In 2005, the State awarded two grants for a total of €7 million to these local government communities. The administering Power reported a slow use of credits, however, owing to difficulties in the application process, and in putting the projects into effect.[16]

30. According to information provided by the administering Power, the French State continued to offer fiscal incentives to encourage investment in its Overseas Territories, as well as specific tax facilities aimed at strengthening New Caledonia's metallurgy and mining sectors, hotel industry, housing, transport sector and public service concessions.

31. New Caledonia will remain heavily dependent on direct financial transfers from France, which are equivalent to around 30 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). Approximately 80 per cent of that amount is spent on health, education and the payment of public service salaries, with the remainder funding development schemes, mainly in the North and Island Provinces. In December 2005, the French Government announced an increase in financial assistance to the Territory amounting to €910 million (€4,015 per inhabitant). That amount included €128 million for defence, €16.2 million for justice and €21.2 million for finance and industry.[16]

32. Passed by the Territorial Congress in December 2006, the 2007 budget totals $1.3 billion. The Government expects to raise the same amount in revenue, by placing a particular focus on better management and a reform of the tax system, which could eventually see the introduction of an equivalent to a value added tax to replace the still prevalent import tax system.[25]

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[24] *L'Humanité*, 3 January 2003; Virtual Information Centre, 30 January 2004 (see www.vic-info.org).

[25] *Oceania Flash*, 27 December 2006.

33. Meanwhile, as discussed in paragraph 27 above, New Caledonia's currency, the Pacific franc, could be replaced by the euro if all three French Pacific Territories concur. The Chamber of Commerce has commissioned feasibility studies, and its Chairman has stated that the euro would facilitate trade, promote savings and attract foreign investment. On the other hand, the change is opposed by the pro-independence parties, which assert that, under the provisions of the Nouméa Accord, currency matters are to be dealt with locally, and a switch to the euro would serve only to bind New Caledonia more closely to France.[26]

34. Rising costs of living remain an issue of concern. In June 2006, the Territorial Government announced a series of measures aimed at the population's shrinking purchasing power. Economy Minister Didier Leroux said that prices of essential items would be closely monitored for an initial period of 12 months and rent prices would be frozen.[27] In November 2006, the Territorial Congress endorsed far-reaching tax exemptions for a basket of 14 essential food items.[28]

B. Labour

35. According to information provided by the administering Power, 7,842 persons were unemployed at the end of December 2004, corresponding to an unemployment rate of approximately 9.4 per cent. The same source noted that labour disputes are frequent in New Caledonia, leading to many hours of lost productivity owing to strikes and lockouts Despite the more conciliatory stance of the AE-led Government towards the Kanak population, industrial disputes and strikes, which are sometimes accompanied by violence, are expected to remain a feature of the economic and political scene.[29]

36. In September 2006, the recently formed Confederation of New Caledonian Workers' Union (CSTNC) led a general strike of Kanak workers to protest operations at the Goro nickel mine in the Southern Province. According to CSTNC leader Sylvain Néa, the strikers aimed to raise awareness about not only the environmental impact of the mine, but also the perceived threat of foreign workers and the high cost of living in the Territory.[30] Local trade unions are strongly opposed to the arrival of several thousand Filipino workers hired in 2006 to work at the Goro mine.

37. Unemployment is high among the Kanaks, who have been calling for a law giving preferences to local workers.[31]

C. Mineral resources

38. New Caledonia's economy is dominated by the nickel industry. The Territory, which is the third largest nickel producer in the world after the Russian Federation

[26] Ibid., 23 October 2002; Economist Intelligence Unit, *ViewsWire*, 18 December 2002; Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report* (March 2005).

[27] *Pacific Magazine*, www.pacificmagazine.net, 7 June 2006.

[28] Ibid., 9 November 2006.

[29] Economist Intelligence Unit (March 2005).

[30] *Pacific Magazine*, www.pacificmagazine.net, 26 September 2006.

[31] *Oxford Analytica*, 26 October 2006.

and Canada, is estimated to have at least 25 per cent of the world's nickel reserves[32] and is responsible for 6 per cent of the world's nickel output, employing some 3,500 people in mining firms of varying sizes. Although this highly dynamic sector makes up between 80 and 90 per cent of New Caledonia's exports and generates numerous related economic activities, it is fragile in that it is almost entirely dependent on international demand and nickel prices. For that reason, emphasis continues to be placed on the development of local metallurgical production, which creates more wealth, rather than on mineral exports.[16] Additionally, strong demand from both China and India and supply disruptions in New Caledonia have kept nickel prices high. Official prices on the London Metal Exchange rose by 135 per cent in 2006 and by another 20 per cent, in January 2007, to a record $950 per metric ton.[33]

39. There are currently three major projects related to nickel mining under way in the Territory, namely, those of Société Le Nickel, Xstrata and Companhia Vale de Rio Doce (see A/AC.109/2000/4, paras. 30-32; A/AC.109/2001/14, paras. 33-36; and A/AC.109/2002/13, paras. 36 and 37). While it is hoped that these projects will lead to significant economic growth, they remain controversial for environmental and financial reasons. There has been an ongoing debate for some years over the impact that new nickel projects will have on New Caledonia's pristine maritime environment and coral reef system. The reef is 1,600 kilometres long and covers about 8,000 square kilometres. It is regarded by scientists as having great research potential and it is also a major tourist attraction. The Kanaks believe that mining rights are being sold off cheaply, that the economic benefits are not flowing to the poorer areas of the Territory and that development will damage the local environment.[29]

40. The first of the three projects is being developed by Société Le Nickel (the New Caledonian affiliate of the French State-owned company Eramet), which is investing between €140 million and €190 million in its Doniambo smelter to boost production from 60,000 tons to 75,000 tons per year. Work on the renovation began in 2006 but faced several delays, as Doniambo was a target of the CSTNC-led strike in September, as well as multiple blockades.[34]

41. The second project under way is a joint venture between the Kanak-controlled Société Minière du Sud-Pacifique and the Canadian company Falconbridge Limited, recently acquired by the Swiss mining group Xstrata.[35] The project will include the construction of a smelter in the North Province to process nickel from the Koniambo mountains. It is estimated that this smelter will produce some 60,000 tons per year, creating 800 jobs directly and 2,000 indirectly. It is also at the heart of a major project to bring wealth and employment to the underdeveloped North Province through the construction of an electric power plant, a deep-water port and a hydraulic dam expected to raise New Caledonia's long-term growth rate to 6.5 per cent.[36] Production is not due to begin until the period 2008-2009, but the North Province government began construction of residential and commercial buildings in 2004 around the Koniambo site in order to prepare for the population increase that will occur when the mine opens.[10]

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[32] Economist Intelligence Unit (December 2002).

[33] *Dow Jones Commodities News*, 7 February 2007.

[34] *Pacific Magazine*, www.pacificmagazine.net, 11 October 2006.

[35] Ibid., 6 November 2006.

[36] Economist Intelligence Unit (March 2006).

42. The third project, a new nickel mine at Goro, South Province, was run by the Canadian company Inco until October 2006, when the Brazilian Companhia Vale de Rio Doce acquired 75 per cent of Inco's shares.[37] The project suffered numerous setbacks in 2006. A riot led by the Kanak environmental group Rheebu Nuu in April 2006 caused approximately $10 million worth of damage.[38] As noted in paragraph 36, a general strike in September 2006 paralysed construction at the mine for several weeks. The Goro project has also been contested by Rheebu Nuu in the French High Court, which ordered a halt to construction of the mine's waste storage site in November 2006. The Paris Court of Appeal overturned that ruling in February 2007, giving permission for the full resumption of construction work on the grounds that environmental studies failed to establish that the storage site posed a pollution risk.[39]

43. The three provinces have each signed up to acquire a total share of 10 per cent in Goro Nickel. The share was originally held by the French Government's mining and geological research department. Notwithstanding further delays, the mine is due to open in 2007 and is expected to eventually produce 60,000 tons of nickel and 5,000 tons of cobalt per year.[40]

D. Tourism

44. In 2003, the New Caledonia Government decided that Japanese nationals, who have been the mainstay of the tourism industry, could visit New Caledonia for 90 days without a visa. In addition, according to the administering Power, the French Foreign Minister proposed that China initiate negotiations on an agreement that would also accord New Caledonia and French Polynesia the status of "approved tourist destination" for Chinese visitors.[3] However, political instability and continuous labour strikes constitute the two main problems for the Territory's tourism sector. The Territory also has to compete with other attractive Pacific Islands, such as Hawaii or Guam.[41]

45. According to the Territory's Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies, tourist arrivals in 2006 totalled 100,491, up from 60,000 in 2005.[42]

46. A strategic plan to revive the tourism industry, commissioned by the Government and published in December 2005, aims to increase the number of tourists to 180,000 during the decade 2005-2015. The plan consists of three phases to be implemented successively in 2006, 2008 and 2012, and will seek to diversify those tourist destinations that are away from the capital. The first phase involved a new marketing strategy and financed rental accommodation designed to attract an upscale clientele. The second phase will increase hotel accommodations by 1,200 rooms, with a view to launching a new tourist image. The final phase will consolidate New Caledonia's position in the international tourism market.[43]

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[37] *Pacific Magazine*, www.pacificmagazine.net, 27 October 2006.
[38] Ibid., 5 April 2006.
[39] Ibid., 6 February 2006.
[40] Inco Limited, 18 February 2005 (www.inco.com).
[41] *Pacific Magazine*, 28 December 2005.
[42] See www.isee.nc.
[43] *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, www.Inc.nc, 16 December 2005.

47. An international cruise company, P&O Cruises, has decided to make New Caledonia its main port of call in an expanded cruise programme from Australia. All three liners on the route have docked at a new port, Ouvéa, since 2005. New Caledonia is now the most frequently visited destination by P&O Cruises in the region, with the Territory receiving almost half of all port visits made by the company's three Australia-based liners. A third Loyalty Islands port, Maré, will be added to the company's growing portfolio of New Caledonian destinations in the near future. Other ports of call are Nouméa, Emerald Bay and the Isle of Pines.[36]

E. Other economic sectors

48. Other sectors that contribute to New Caledonia's GDP are public administration, commerce, services, construction and public works, small- and medium-scale industry, agriculture and tourism.

49. The agriculture and fishery sectors account for only 2 per cent of GDP, yet they increasingly occupy a central place in New Caledonian society, employing some 30 per cent of the population and making it possible to contain the rural exodus. Rural development projects are aimed at increasing the local market, thereby decreasing the need for imported food. Diversification in the agricultural sector and the development of the aquaculture and fishing industries continued to expand in 2006. Fisheries are underdeveloped, with commercial fishing accounting for only a third of the total catch, most of it tuna exported to Japan. While the North Province and Loyalty Islands authorities have continued the expansion of their fishing fleets, there were mounting concerns about falling stocks of certain species of tuna in the region attributable to overfishing, climate change and ocean temperature cycles. In addition, heavy dependence on imported oil is prompting renewed regional interest in alternative fuel sources, such as ethanol from local sugar.[44]

50. The aquaculture industry, which mainly relies on farming shrimp for export, is subsidized by the French Government.

IV. Consideration of the question by the United Nations

A. Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

51. At its 13th meeting, held on 22 June 2006 (see A/AC.109/2006/SR.13), the Special Committee on decolonization adopted a draft resolution, submitted by Fiji and Papua New Guinea, in which all parties involved in the question of the status of New Caledonia were urged to continue promoting a framework for the peaceful progress of that Territory towards an act of self-determination (see A/AC.109/2006/L.13). Such a framework would safeguard the rights of all New Caledonians, especially the indigenous Kanak people.

[44] Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report* (December 2005).

B. Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

52. At its 5th meeting, on 5 October 2006, the Fourth Committee heard a statement by petitioner Raphaël Mapou, from the Comité Rheebu Nuu, the Kanak environmental group. Mr. Mapou said that the Kanak people were seeking to recover their sovereignty over New Caledonia's mineral wealth, which the multinational companies sought to appropriate. He expressed doubt as to whether the administering Power was conducting the decolonization process in good faith and whether the process could proceed in accordance with the rules set out by the international community. Mr. Mapou also said that the Kanak people faced an attempt at recolonization under the pretext of development and democracy, while New Caledonia was at great risk of environmental damage and financial loss at the hands of multinational companies (see A/C.4/61/SR.5). At its 7th meeting, on 11 October 2006, the Fourth Committee adopted a draft resolution on the question of New Caledonia (see A/C.4/61/SR.7).

C. Action by the General Assembly

53. At its 79th plenary meeting, on 14 December 2006, the General Assembly adopted without a vote resolution 61/126 on the question of New Caledonia.